

Key Strategies

In developing the neighborhood plan, the Commercial Core Planning Committee focused on land use and urban design strategies that create the type of development incentives needed to meet Comprehensive Plan growth targets while improving neighborhood character and development potential.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategy 1: Modify zoning and design standards to stimulate desirable development and promote architectural variety.

- DRC/DMC Rezone
- Small Site Development
- Building Height Variance

Strategy 2: Rework bonus and TDR programs to stimulate desirable development and promote architectural variety,

- Tiering Elimination
- Bonus System Overhaul
- TDR System Overhaul
- Small Building TDR
- Historic Building TDR

Strategy 3: Create development incentives to stimulate housing production.

- Housing Super Bonus
- “Invisible” Housing FAR Exemption

Strategy 4: Develop Green Streets and open space to enhance urban design character and to support population growth.

- City Property TDR
- Open Space TDR
- Pedestrian Streetscapes Implementation
- Pedestrian Streetscapes Funding

Strategy 5: Create a master plan to guide the design and maintenance of public spaces in the downtown.

- Downtown Urban Design Plan

Strategy 1:

Modify zoning and design standards to stimulate desirable development and promote architectural variety.

In order to meet the Comprehensive Plan's housing and job growth targets, the Commercial Core needs more innovative zoning and design standards that will allow development capacity to be efficiently utilized. Modification of select zoning designations and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements will bring the Commercial Core's underutilized sites into a more usable form, thereby increasing development capacity. In addition, the recommended land use code modifications will promote architectural variety in the Commercial Core.

See Policies: P1, P2

Recommendation

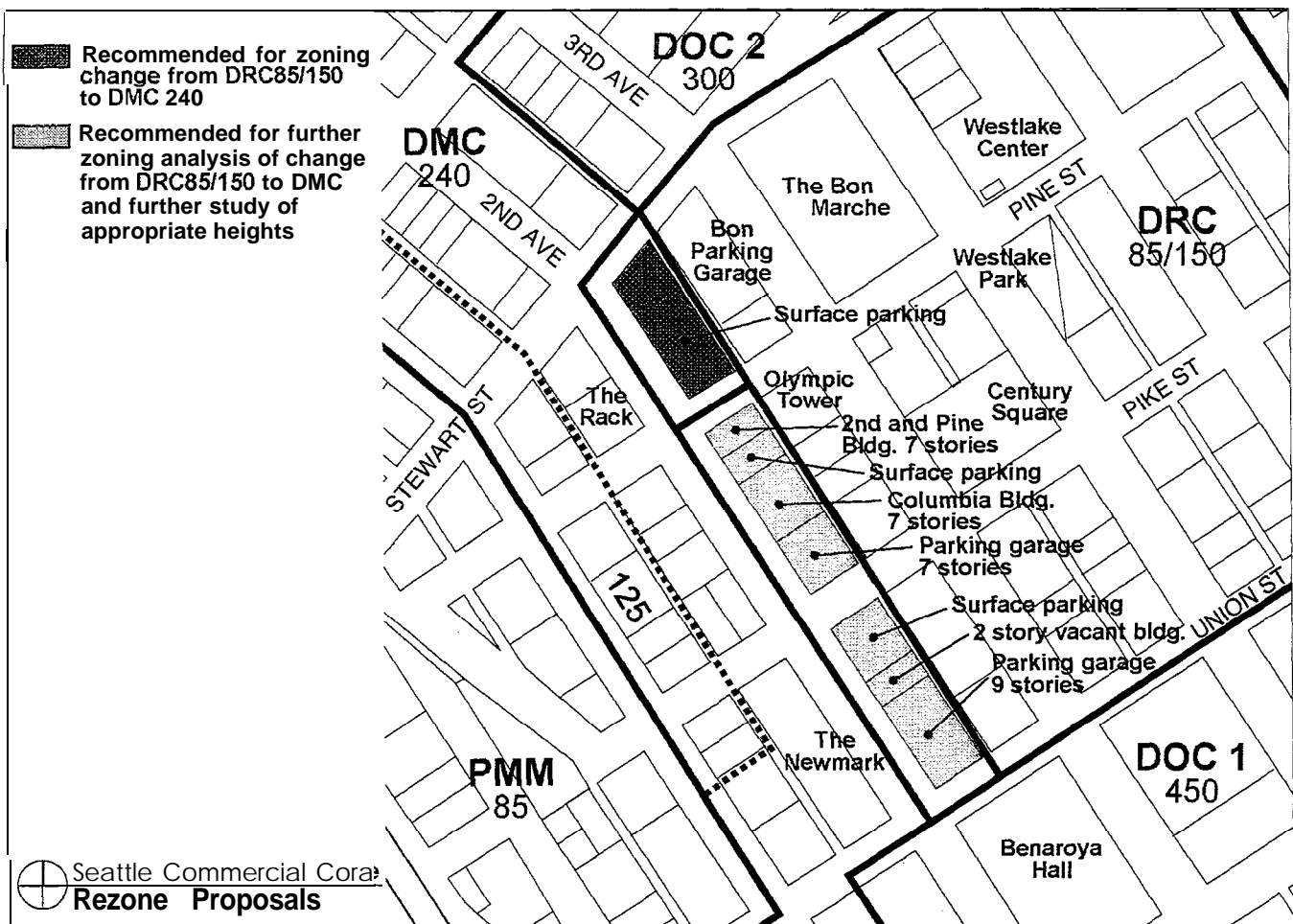
DRC/DMC Rezone Adjust the zoning boundary between the DRC and DMC zones along Second Avenue between Stewart and Union Streets.

- **Second and Stewart Rezone** Change the zoning of the half-block on the east side of Second Avenue between Stewart and Pike Streets from DRC-85/150 to DMC-240.
- **Second Avenue Rezone Study** Conduct a zoning analysis to explore rezoning the half-block on the east side of Second Avenue between Pine and Union Streets from DRC-85/150 to DMC. In this process, prepare additional studies to determine appropriate building heights for the rezoned area.

High priority. See Commercial Core Matrix, Activity LU-1 and LU-1a.

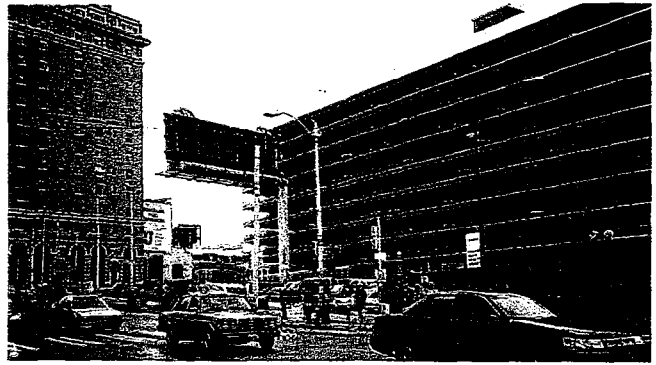
Purpose

- To stimulate new development, especially housing development, on underutilized sites by providing adequate development capacity.
- To promote more pedestrian and street-level commercial activity in areas with unstable streetscape environments.



Rationale

The current Downtown Retail Core (DRC) is focused in the Westlake area and is growing eastward around the new Pacific Place Center and up Pike Street toward the Convention Center. As a result, the Second Avenue sites recommended for rezoning are no longer situated for large scale retail development. In addition, current zoning on these sites allows limited height potential (85 to 150 feet) coupled with a significant retail requirement. Thus, these half-block sites are too small to provide adequate capacity to attract new development. **Rezoning the sites with a DMC designation will encourage, mixed-use retail/housing development.** This designation is more consistent with zones abutting the sites' north, south, and west sides, as well as with existing structures abutting the sites' east side. New mixed-use development with street-level retail will help stabilize what is now a deteriorated streetscape environment, and upgrade the image and character of the major pedestrian connection between Westlake Center (the Retail Core) and Pike Place Market.



East side of Second Avenue between Stewart and Pine Streets. (Area proposed for rezone.)



East side of Second Avenue between Pine and Pike Streets. (Area proposed for rezone study.)



East side of Second Avenue between Pike and Union Streets. (Area proposed for rezone study.)

COMMERCIAL CORE ZONING DESIGNATIONS

DOC1	Downtown Office Core-1
DOC2	Downtown Office Core-2
DMC	Downtown Mixed-Use Commercial
DRC	Downtown Retail Core

Recommendation

Small Site Development Eliminate FAR restrictions on small sites (quarter-block or less) in DOC1, DOC2 and DMC zones, and calculate density based on height limits only. Allow required parking to be provided on a cash in-lieu-of basis at the owner's option Require:

- Public benefit features:
 - Retail Shopping (at street level)
 - Overhead weather protection
 - Sculptured Building Tops (in lieu of setbacks)
- TDRs to be used for achieving any building area above FAR 15
- Design review

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity W-19.

Purpose

- To provide development capacity that is currently constrained by small building sites to be used in meeting Comprehensive Plan targets.
- To promote development of small (quarter-block) sites with new small buildings that contribute to the neighborhood's architectural diversity and character.



Smith Tower (FAR 20.1)

Hoge Building (FAR 16)

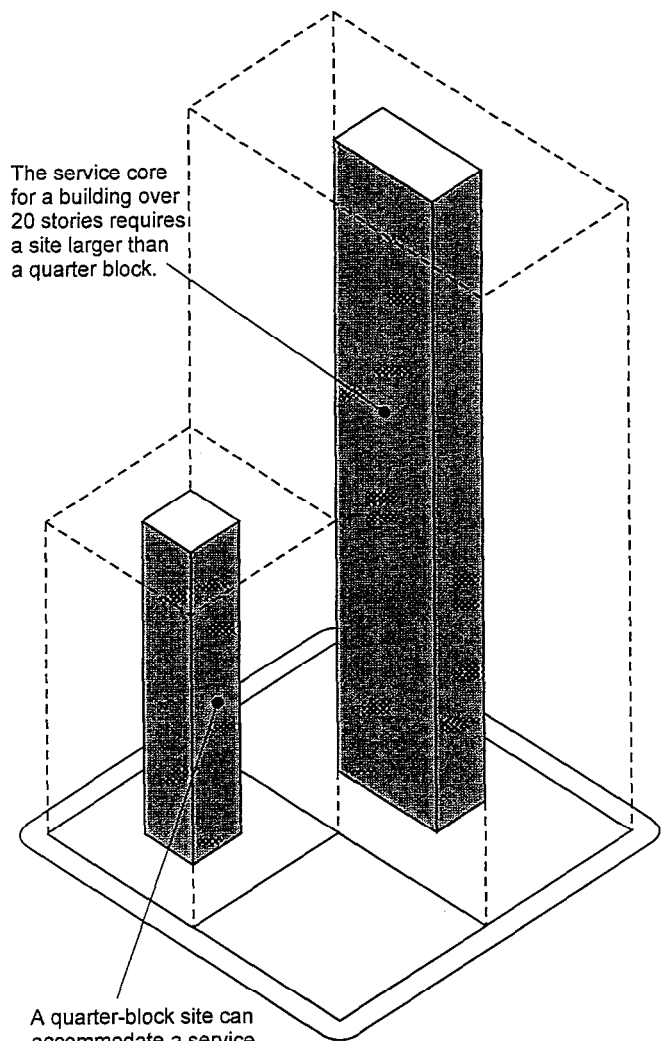
Seattle Tower (FAR 15.2)

Existing quarter-block or smaller buildings that could not be built under the current land use code. Currently permitted heights (based on FAR 14) are indicated by the dashed yellow lines.

Rationale

Many of the downtown's most attractive and cherished older office buildings – Smith Tower, Hoge Building, Seattle Tower, and Olympic Tower, for example – are built on small quarter-block sites. Many potential building sites in the DOC1, DOC2, and DMC zones are also small sites of one quarter block or less. However, under current FAR limits and bonus standards, small floorplate buildings are no longer allowed in Seattle. In practice, the required service cores (areas devoted to circulation, restrooms, mechanical equipment, etc.) for small-site buildings will limit their height to approximately 20 stories (250-300 feet). Above this height, the necessary service core size reduces the building's efficiency and limits its economic viability.

There are approximately ten sites in the Commercial Core that could potentially qualify as quarter-block construction sites. If all of these sites were developed using this recommendation, it would increase the Commercial Core's development capacity by approximately 600,000 square feet. However, only 50% to 60% of the potential sites would be likely to seek this development approach. Thus, the net effect of this recommendation would be to increase the Commercial Core's capacity by approximately 300,000 to 350,000 square feet, or between 1,000 and 1,500 jobs (+/- 1%).



A quarter-block site can accommodate a service core for a building of approximately 20 stories.

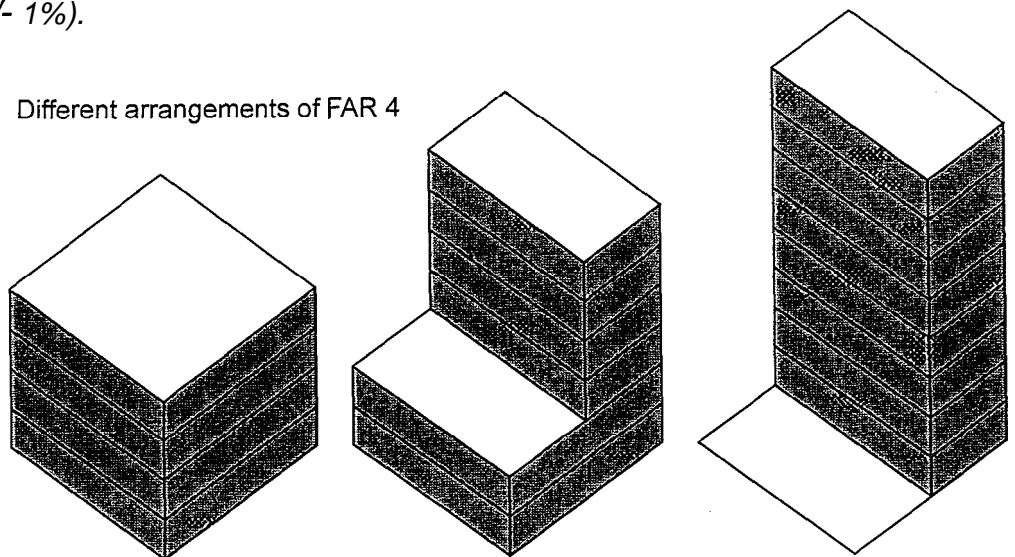
Relationship of lot area, service core size, and building height.

FLOOR AREA RATIO

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the relationship between the gross area permitted within a structure and the area of the lot on which it is located.

Base FAR is the density of development that is allowed without bonuses or Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs).

Different arrangements of FAR 4



Recommendation

Building Height Variance Allow building heights within the Commercial Core's existing DOC1 and DOC2 zones to exceed current height limits by 20% to 25% if the project provides urban design and public benefit features supported by the neighborhood plan. Maintain current FAR provisions to control overall building bulk. Require design review.

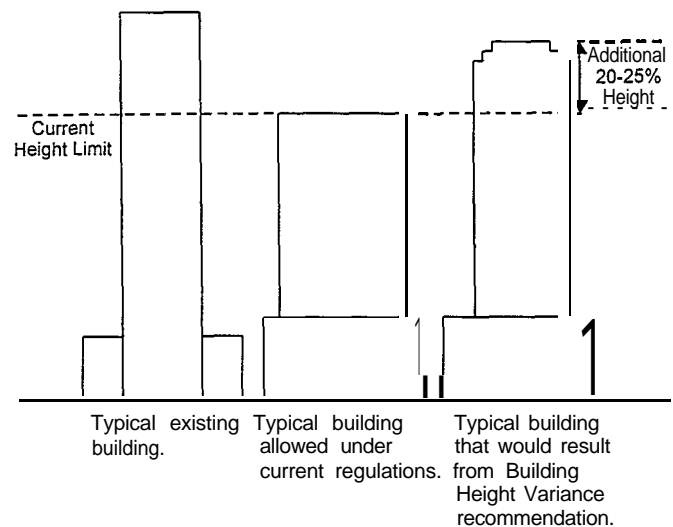
Medium-High priority. See Commercial Core Matrix, Activity LU-2.

Purpose

- To offset the current code's tendency to produce squat, unattractive buildings.
- To improve the urban design relationship a building to its neighbors by allowing a structure of similar height to adjacent buildings.
- To allow the scale of the building and its base to be better related to adjacent smaller or low-rise structures.
- To allow a more efficient, functional configuration for the building tower.
- To allow better incorporation or provision of public benefit or public access features in the building design or site plan.

Rationale

Current regulations for DOC1 and DOC2 zones are producing low, bulky buildings with inefficient floorplate layouts. Allowing exceptions to the current height limit (without increasing the density [FAR] allowed on a site) would help eliminate this functional and urban design characteristic. The result would likely be buildings with more efficient floorplates, better views, and more slender profiles.



Current height limits are substantially lower than many existing downtown buildings and produce low, bulky buildings. Allowing some additional height, without increasing FARs, would provide flexibility to produce better designs.

Strategy 2:

Rework bonus and TDR programs to stimulate desirable development and promote architectural variety.

Current bonus and TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) programs do not offer incentives that support the Commercial Core's goals of creating jobs and encouraging the development of housing, Green Streets, open space, and other public benefit features that the neighborhood desires. While the Downtown Urban Center plan recommends streamlining bonus and TDR programs for all downtown neighborhoods, the following bonus items and priorities reflect recommended program adjustments that specifically support the Commercial Core's goals and policies.

See Policies: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7

Recommendation

Tiering Elimination Eliminate the tiering system used to calculate maximum FAR allowances. Develop an alternative system that assigns bonus values and priorities based on community goals and policies. Make housing development a high priority.

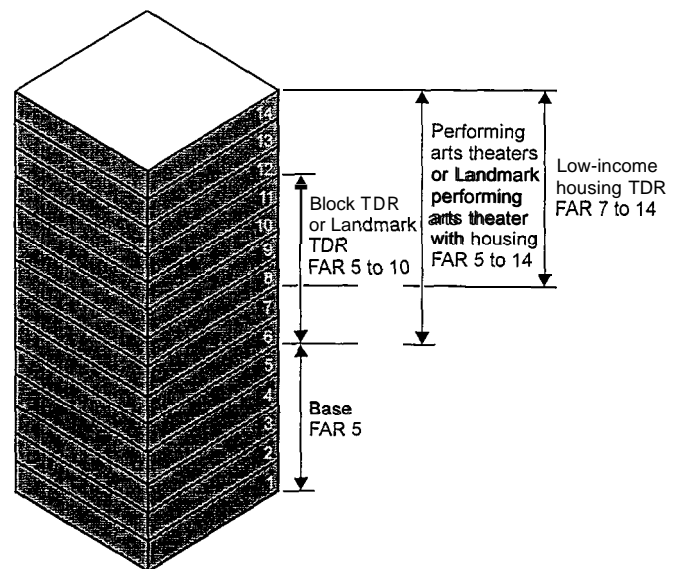
High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LIJ-4.

Purpose

- To simplify the system used to calculate FAR allowances
- To tailor FAR allowances in ways that achieve neighborhood priorities.
- To promote a mix of desirable public benefit features rather than the same mix of benefits being used in almost all projects.

Rationale

The current code provides a hierarchy of options for applying bonuses and TDRs to achieve a site's maximum allowable FAR. Under this system, low-income housing, performing arts theaters, and landmark structure preservation are the only TDR features usable to achieve FAR maximums. Most developers and design professionals agree with the intent of the existing bonus and TDR system. However, they object to the tiering formulas, which require that top-level FARs be achieved only after other bonus features have been applied. This recommendation would eliminate tiering from FAR calculations and replace it with a system that requires that neighborhood priority benefit features (for example, low-moderate-income housing) be achievable without designating a specific FAR range for their application. This approach would simplify the current process of calculating allowable FARs.



DOC1 Bonus TDR System

The current code requires specific bonuses and TDRs to be applied to specific FAR ranges. The Tiering Elimination recommendation would permit bonuses and TDRs to be applied anywhere within the maximum FAR limit.

Recommendations

Bonus System Overhaul Re-evaluate the existing Floor Area Bonus System. Simplify and balance the menu of bonusable public benefit features to reflect neighborhood plan goals and policies. Eliminate unused or undesired features, make highly desirable features into requirements, and consolidate similar features. Review and update the system every three to five years.

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-5.

TDR System Overhaul Re-evaluate the existing Transfer of Development Rights system and reorder its priorities to reflect neighborhood plan goals and policies. Review and update the system every three to five years.

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-9.

Purpose

- To streamline incentive systems in order to encourage development of public benefits and land uses desired by the community.
- To develop a process to periodically review bonus items and TDR programs and recalibrate their values in order to achieve desired objectives.

Rationale

The FAR Bonus and TDR incentive systems currently applied to downtown developments are sophisticated and complicated. They are difficult for developers, investors, planners, designers, and legal professionals to master. For example, the Downtown Urban Center has 14 land use and overlay zones, 18 height limits, seven “base” FAR standards, and nine “maximum” FAR limits, and approximately 39 different zoning standards. There are four different tables for calculating a total of 14 public benefit features bonuses. There are approximately six tiering procedures and calculation approaches for combining the above standards into a maximum building FAR envelope. The Seattle Land Use and Zoning Code is 794 pages long; approximately half of the text pertains to downtown land use and zoning designations and calculations. Finally, Directors Rule 20-93 (“Public Benefits Features”), which is 112 pages long, provides further guidelines for calculating and applying bonuses and TDRs.

FLOOR AREA BONUS SYSTEM

A “Public Benefit Feature” is an amenity, use, or other feature determined to have general public benefit, which is provided by a developer to qualify for an increase in buildable floor area. This increase in area is known as a “bonus.” The value of the bonus reflects both public priorities for the feature and its construction cost.

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS SYSTEM

Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) refers to the transfer of the unused buildable floor area capacity from a “sending” site to another “receiving” site.

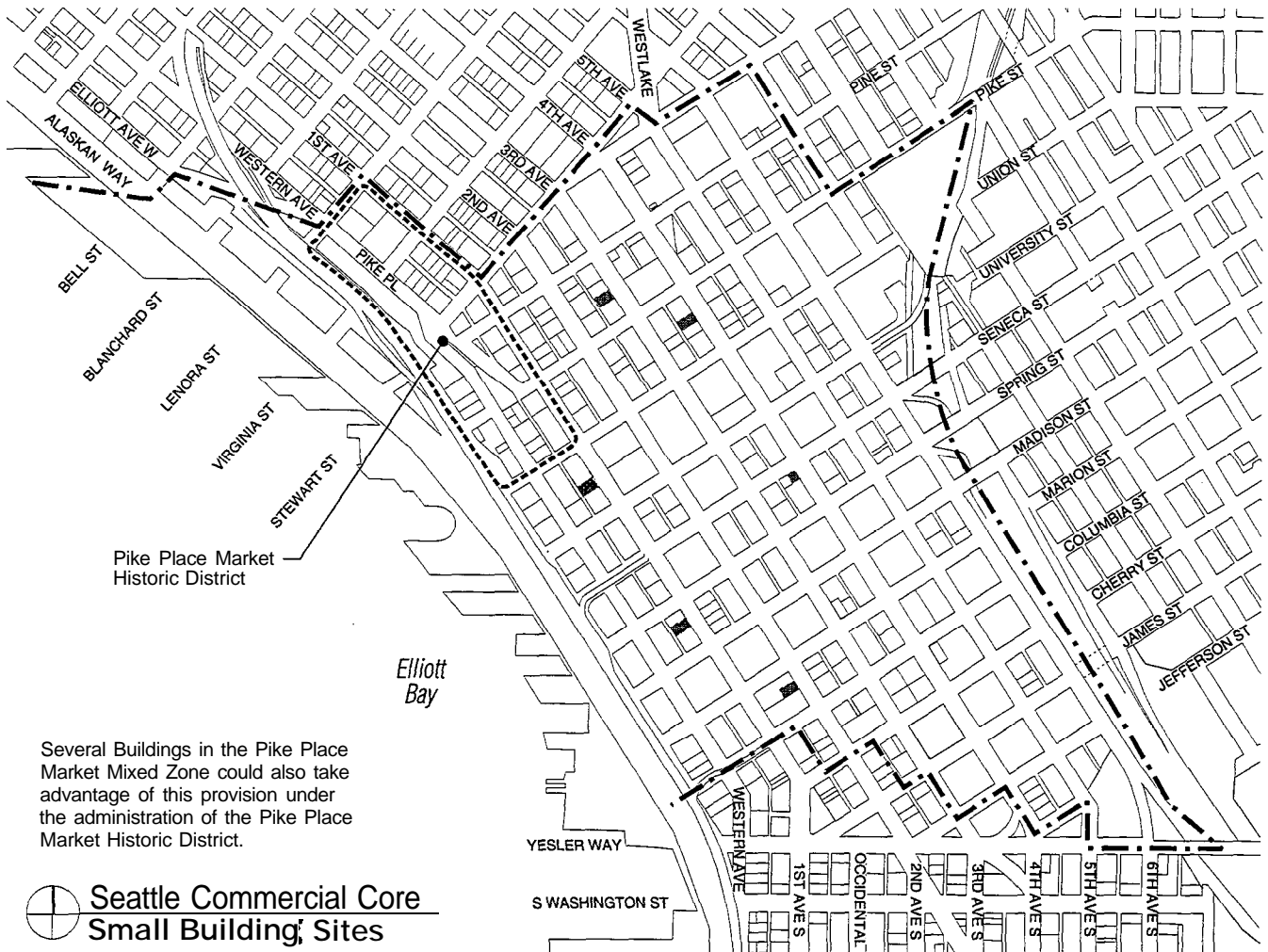
Recommendation

Small Building TDR Modify FAR requirements for small buildings (less than 8,000 square-foot floorplates) by allowing unused FAR development capacity to be transferred as TDRs to other downtown sites at a multiplier of four. Although buildings do not have to be eligible for landmark designation, require buildings to be renovated in compliance with Landmark Board standards.

Medium priority. See Commercial Core Matrix, Activity LU-3.

Purpose

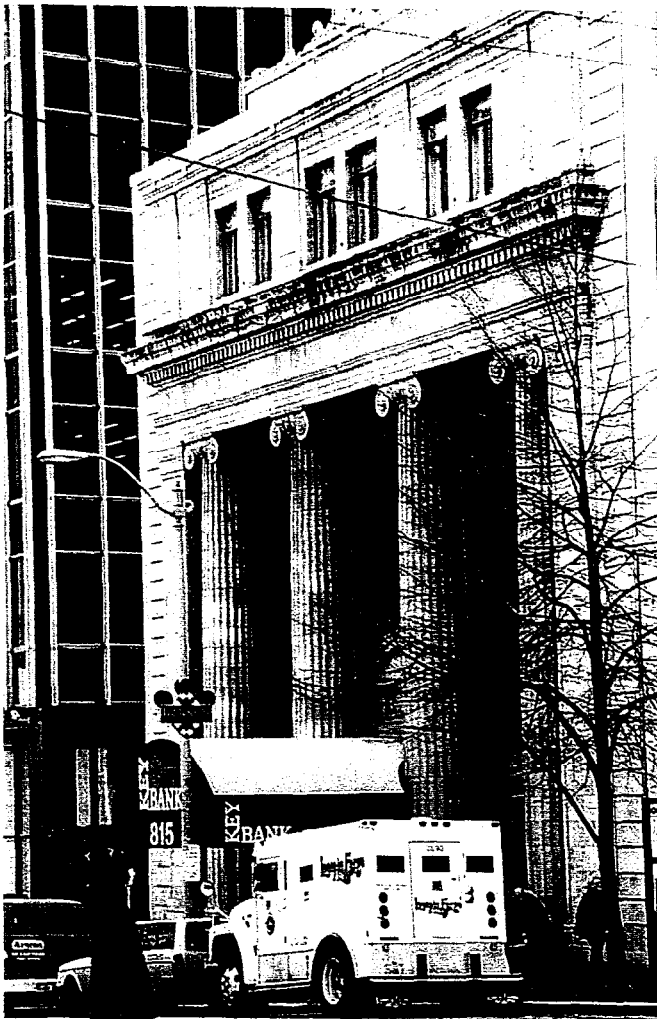
- To promote retention of unique, small buildings and thereby promote architectural diversity in the Commercial Core.
- To provide a new TDR pool to support downtown investment.



The small buildings identified in the Commercial Core (outside of Pike Place Market) have a total of about 54,000 square feet of unused development rights, which would produce approximately 216,000 TDRs.

Rationale

A building type at risk in downtown Seattle is the unique, small building on a small site of approximately 8,000 square feet or less. Because these structures are developed at a density significantly below the base FAR for the site, they are typically too small to support complete renovation without some type of incentive.



Examples of a small buildings that could benefit from transferring their unused development rights.

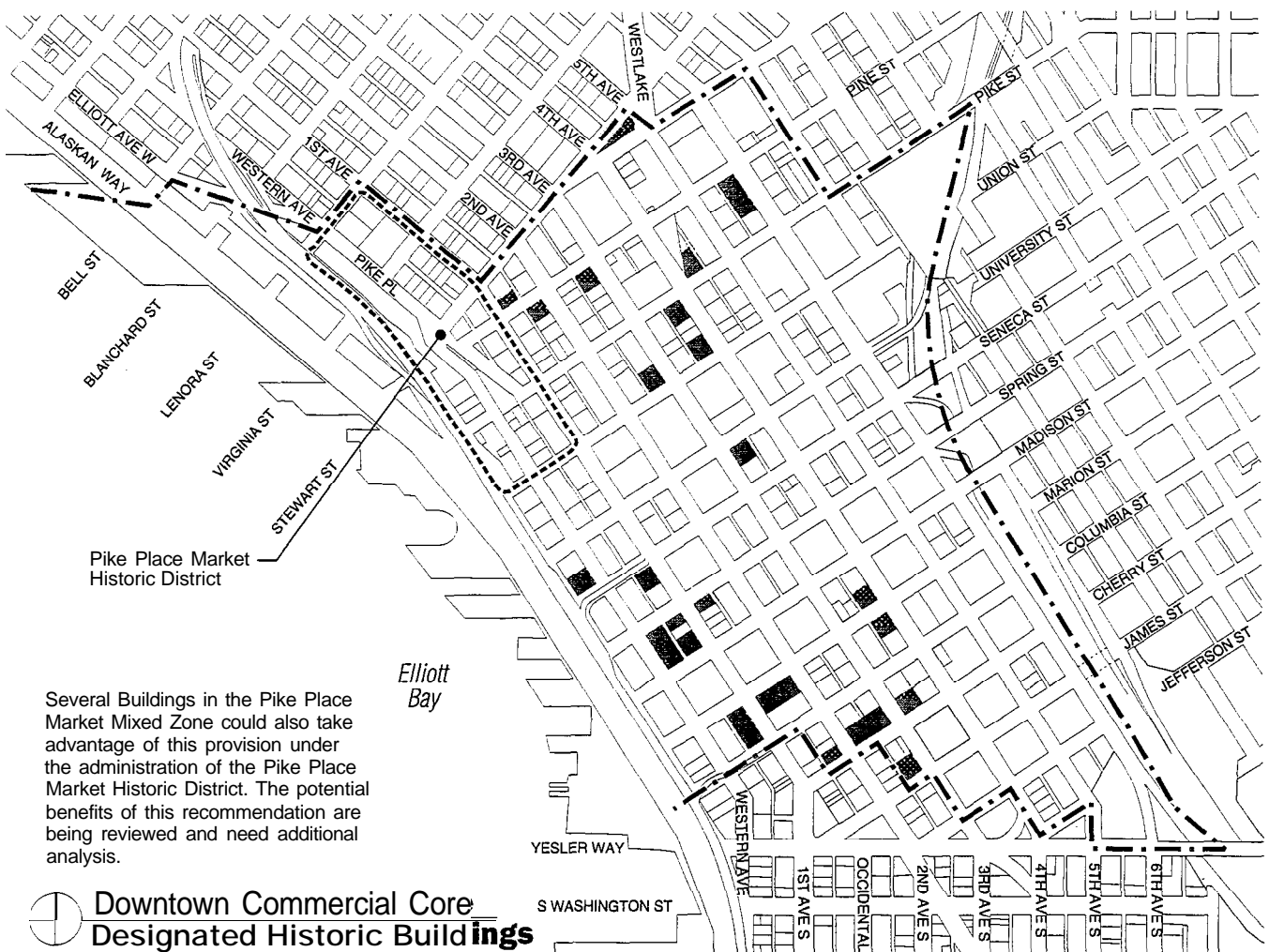
Recommendation

Historic Building TDR Create a TDR for historic buildings that allows the inherent, functional space inefficiencies (i.e., non-rentable area that is used for elevators, stairs, hallways, bathrooms, etc.) of renovated, designated historic structures to be transferred as TDRs to other downtown sites at a multiplied value.

Medium-High priority, See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LIJ-16.

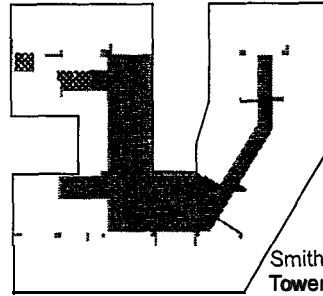
Purpose

- To promote retention of historic buildings by encouraging building owners to preserve historic buildings rather than redevelop them in order to capitalize on a site's development potential.
- a To provide a new TDR pool to support downtown investment.
- a To allow historic buildings to compete more effectively with modern building designs.



Rationale

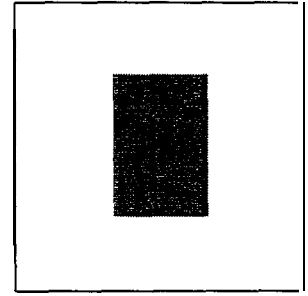
Most historic commercial buildings are less spatially efficient than new construction. This Historic Building TDR recommendation would allow non-rentable areas devoted to circulation, restrooms, mechanical equipment, etc. in historic buildings to be transferred as TDRs to other downtown sites. These TDRs would transfer at a multiplied ratio of 4 times the calculated building inefficiency. Buildings that utilize this TDR would be required to adhere to the historic preservation standards established by the Seattle Office of Urban Conservation.



Historic Building Inefficiencies:

- Circulation areas
- Thick walls
- Odd-shaped floorplate

Can be $\pm 25\%$ of a building floorplate



Modern Building Inefficiencies

- Circulation areas
- Typically $\pm 15\%$ of a building floorplate

Historic buildings are typically much less spatially efficient than modern buildings.

Strategy 3:

Create development incentives to stimulate housing production.

Continued housing development in the Commercial Core will need new incentives if development is to meet the Comprehensive Plan's housing production targets. The "Housing Incentive Super Bonus" addresses this issue by significantly increasing the area's ability to meet growth targets while maintaining the current zoning system. The intention of this recommendation is to enhance the ability of the Commercial Core to meet its Comprehensive Plan targets.

See Policies: P1, P4

Recommendation

Housing Super Bonus Create a housing development incentive package for commercial and mixed-use projects in the DOC1, DOC2, and DMC-240 zones of the Commercial Core. Retain existing base zoning but allows developers to:

- Increase existing base FAR by two in exchange for providing these public benefit features:
 - Retail Shopping (at street level)
 - Sidewalk Widening
 - Overhead Weather Protection
- Increase maximum allowable FAR by three and increase building height by 30% if:
 - 75% of the additional FAR is achieved by using housing bonuses in which:
 - 25% of all units are affordable to low-moderate-income households
 - 75% of all units are affordable to moderate-income households
 - 25% of the FAR above the new base FAR includes at least three public of these benefit features that support residents:
 - Contributions to Green Streets or to off-site open space features, such as Urban Plazas, Parcel Parks, and Hillclimb Assists (if applicable) (1.5 FAR)
 - Human Services or Child Care Services facilities (1 .0 FAR)
 - Short Term Parking (below grade) (1 .0 FAR)
 - Transit Station Access (if applicable)

Housing may be built on or off site. If housing is built on site, it will be considered “invisible,” i.e., it will not be counted in FAR calculations.

High priority. See Commercial Core Matrix, Activity LU-4, and Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity 2.

Purpose

- To promote housing development in the Commercial Core.
- To simplify application and review of development projects.

HOUSING TARGETS AND INCOME LEVELS

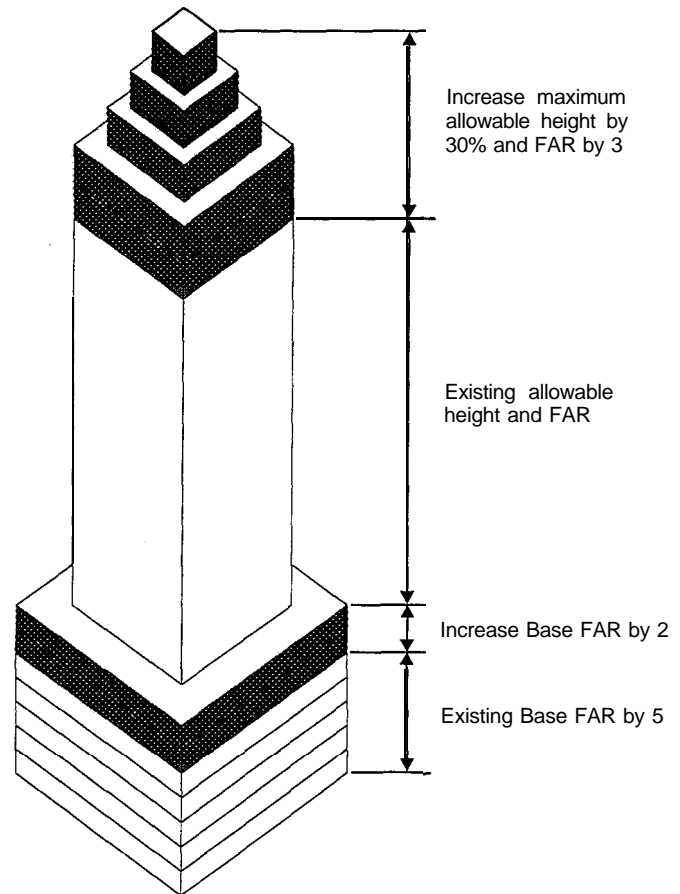
Housing development incentives are typically targeted to specific income levels. In 1998 dollars, yearly income levels for a family of four were:

- Low-Income = 50% or less of median income = \$29,500 or less
- Low-Moderate-Income = 50.1% to 80% of median income = 29,501 to \$47,200
- Moderate-Income = 80.1% to 100% of median income = \$47,201 to \$59,000

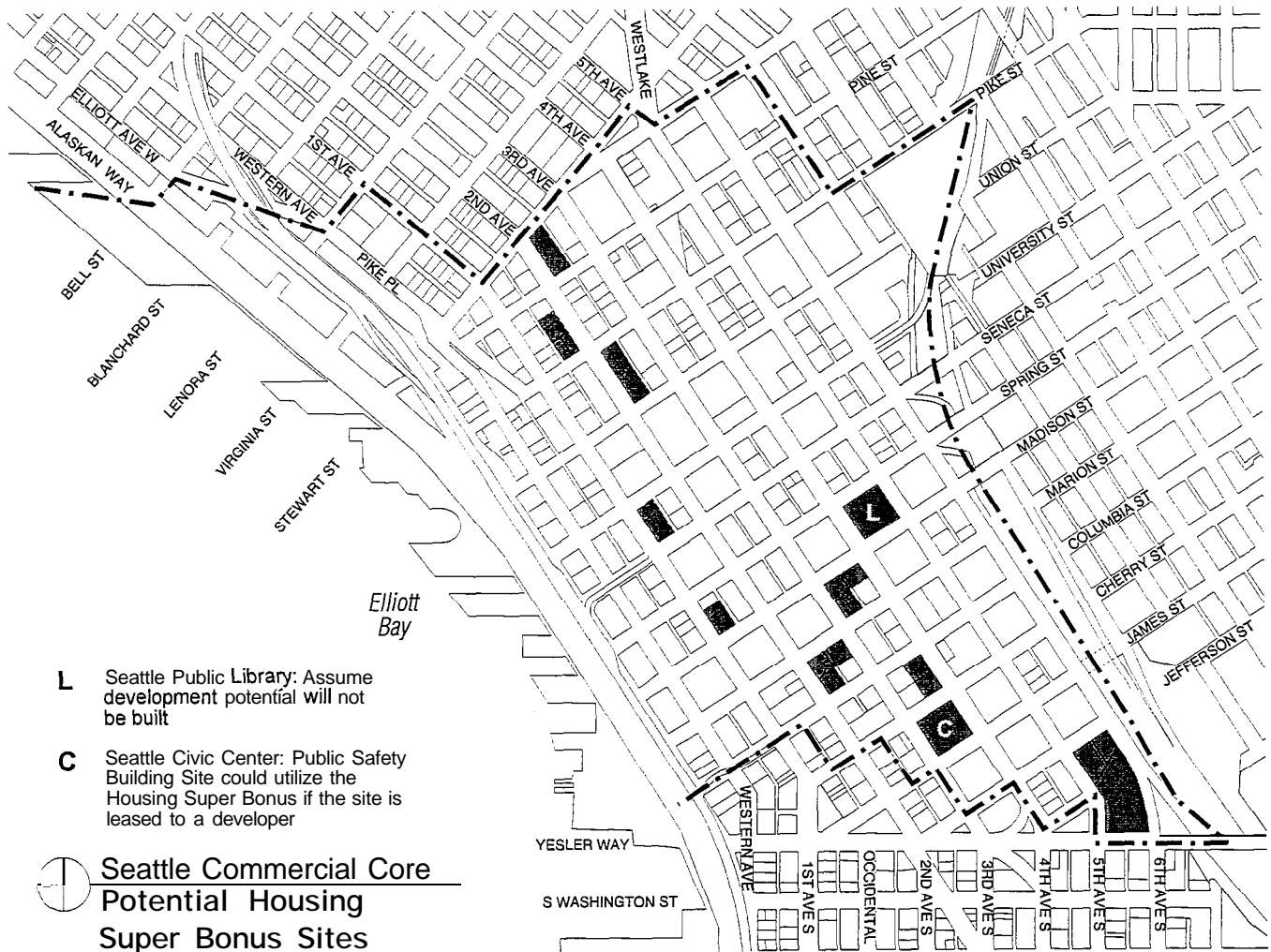
Rationale

A major emphasis of growth management planning is to achieve the housing and employment targets established for Seattle. The Downtown Urban Center and its neighborhoods have been assigned aggressive housing and job targets. To achieve these targets, special incentive opportunities that accommodate housing and job-oriented development will need to be created.

This housing incentive bonus package would be a zoning code special provision. This provision would offer additional FAR and building height in exchange for the development of low-income, low-moderate-income, and moderate-income housing and other related public benefits desired by the neighborhood. Since the Housing Super Bonus would potentially affect only a few Commercial Core sites, it should be **implemented immediately** as a pilot project for downtown. It is anticipated that this proposal could add approximately 2.4% (approximately 3200 jobs) to the Commercial Core's development capacity.



HOUSING SUPER BONUS INCENTIVES				
	DOC1	DOC-300	DOC2-240	DMC-240
FAR				
Existing base FAR	5	4	4	5
Incentive base FAR	7	6	6	7
Existing maximum FAR	14	10	10	7
Incentive maximum FAR	17	13	13	10
Height				
Existing height limit	450	300	240	240
Incentive height limit (+30%)	585 (+135')	390 (+90')	312 (+72')	312 (+72')



CAPACITY ADDED BY HOUSING SUPER BONUS		
	Existing Maximum Capacity	Capacity Added by Housing Super Bonus
DOC1	959,644 SF	205,638 SF
DOC2	1,658,600 SF	497,580 SF
DMC-240 *	718,774 SF	308,046 SF
TOTALS	3,337,018 SF	1,011,264 SF

*Assumes DRC along Second Avenue between Stewart and Pine Streets is rezoned to DMC-240.

Recommendation

“invisible” Housing FAR Exemption Allow housing to be “invisible,” or exempt from FAR calculations, within the DOC1 zone of the Commercial Core.

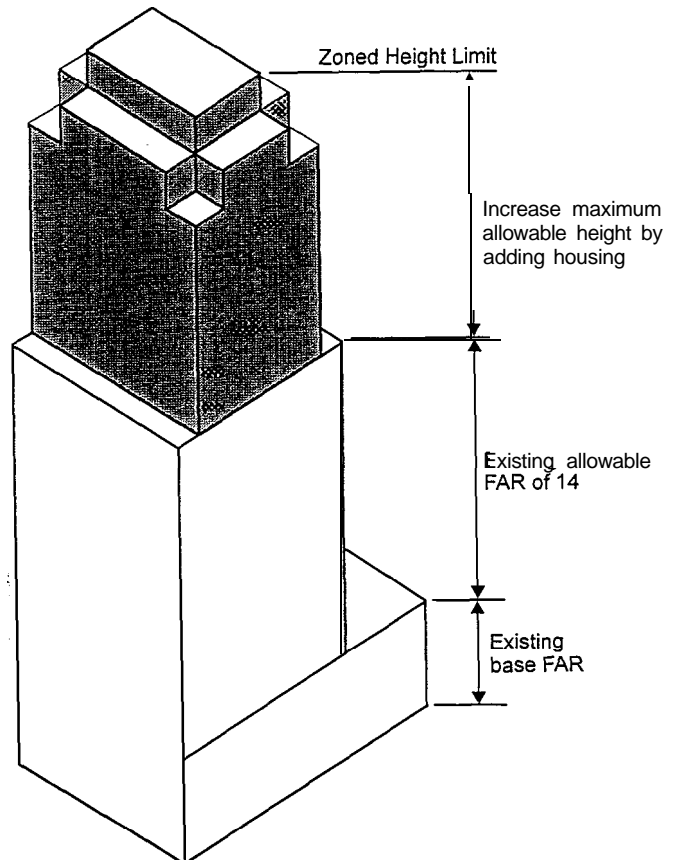
High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-2a.

Purpose

- To provide additional housing development potential in the Commercial Core.

Rationale

Without this change, the DOC zone will develop primarily with commercial/office structures.



Example of building with housing added up to the height limit above the maximum allowed FAR.

Strategy 4:

Develop Green Streets and open space to enhance urban design character and to support population growth.

Public space in the downtown is a precious resource for employees, residents, and visitors. The Commercial Core depends on convenient, safe, and attractive pedestrian environments for its continued success as the retail and business center of Seattle. Streets are dynamic civic spaces that link buildings and open spaces. Open spaces and public gathering areas provide breathing room, recreational opportunities, and celebratory places that create a humane city and neighborhood identity.

See Policies: P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12

Recommendation

City Property TDR Enable unused development capacity from City-owned property within the Downtown Urban Center to be available for sale as TDRs. Earmark proceeds from sales to finance designated Green Street projects.

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-14.

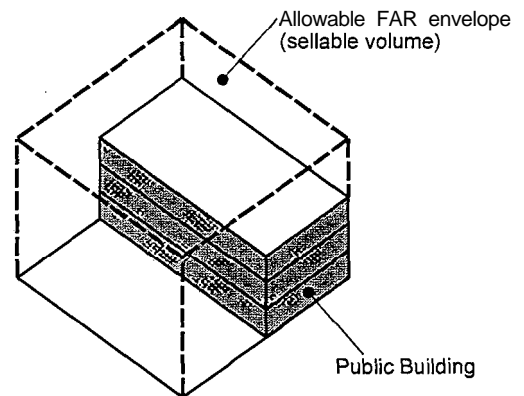
Purpose

- To help fund Green Street design and construction.

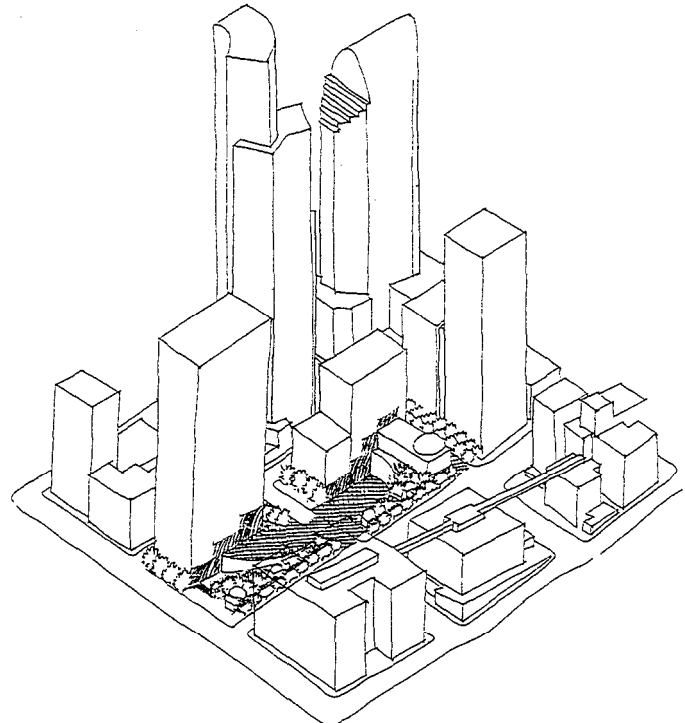
Rationale

Several projects being planned on publicly-owned properties in the Commercial Core will likely be developed at intensities significantly below the sites' full development potential. These projects include: the new Seattle Civic Center, proposed for the current Municipal Building site at a scale that will use only about 25% of the site's full development potential; and the proposed new Seattle Public Library, on a site zoned DOC1 with a base development capacity of 200,000+ square feet and a maximum capacity of over 600,000 square feet.

The City currently has a Green Street plan and a Green Street designation ordinance but there is no organization or funding to support Green Street implementation. The unused development capacity on civic sites could be put to use in supporting Green Street development.



A City-owned building that fills only a portion of its allowed FAR envelope would be allowed to sell unused development rights as TDRs to finance implementation of downtown Green Streets.



The planned Seattle Civic Center may be eligible to use this proposed City Property TDR.

Recommendation

Open Space TDR Allow current and future sites retained or developed as open space to sell unused development capacity as TDRs to other downtown projects. Open space developed as part of a project's public benefit features program would not be eligible as TDRs. Open spaces sending TDRs must conform to location and development criteria established in the downtown neighborhoods' plans and the Downtown Urban Design Plan.

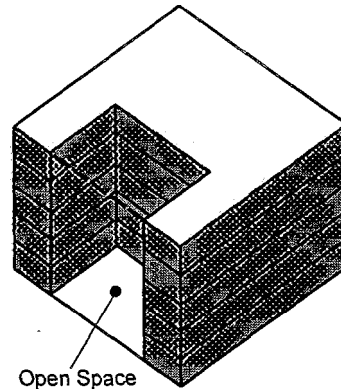
Medium-High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-15.

Purpose

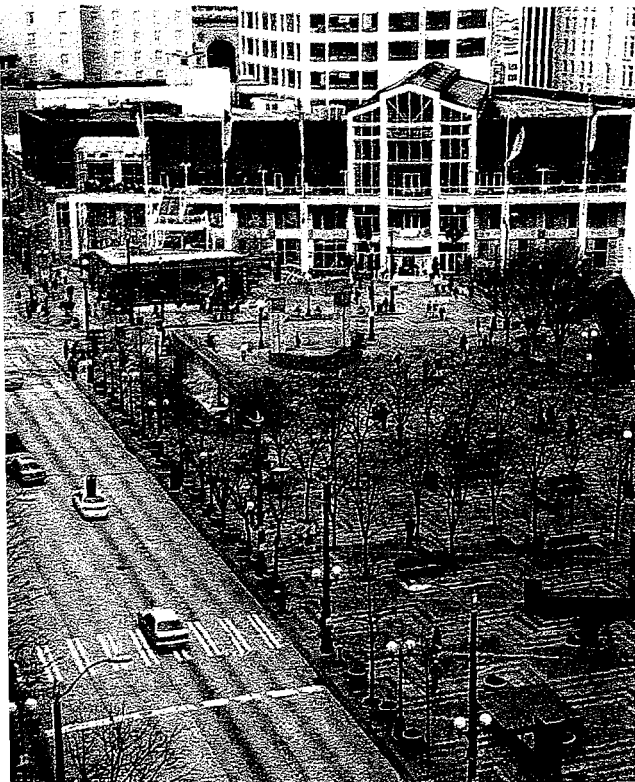
- To help promote and fund open space development.

Rationale

Like the entire Seattle Downtown Urban Center, the Commercial Core is significantly short of open space and outdoor areas with which to support planned job and housing growth. It is unlikely that any existing funding method will be able to afford to develop the open space that is desirable. Some mechanism to finance and support more open space in downtown is needed.



A project would be allowed to sell unused development rights from open space (provided that the open space is not part of the project's public benefit features) as TDRs to finance new open space in the downtown.



Les flake Park



Benaroya Hall garden

Recommendation

Pedestrian Streetscapes Implementation Designate a single City department to administer the process of designing, permitting, constructing, and maintaining pedestrian-oriented streets, in cooperation with other City departments, adjacent property owners, and downtown business organizations. The lead department should be staffed by qualified urban designers, not traffic engineers.

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-24.

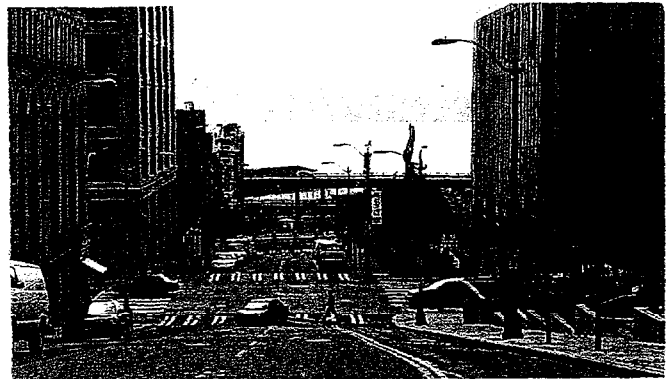
Purpose

- To administer coordinated urban design, construction, and maintenance of Green Streets.

Rationale

The existing Green Streets Ordinance (DCLU Directors Rule 11-93/SED Directors Rule 93-4) sets forth a definition of Green Street types and a process for designing and permitting Green Streets projects. The intent of the ordinance addresses an vital issue for the Commercial Core, i.e., creating attractive, pedestrian-friendly streets. However, in practice, the ordinance falls short of its intent due to lack of design direction, a cumbersome review process, fragmented implementation authority, and lack of funding for design and construction.

Currently, implementation of Green Streets is driven by individual developers who may opt to design and construct a segment of a Green Street as part of a project's public benefit features program. SEA TRAN has authority for-jurisdiction of the street right-of-way, including permitting. DCLU and the Design Commission are responsible for reviewing a Green Street's design, but they have no authority to enforce design standards or allow appropriate departures from those standards. Maintenance is left to the responsibility of abutting property owners, who may or may not carry out maintenance standards appropriate to the city's Commercial Core.



University Street (Green Street)

Recommendation

Pedestrian Streetscapes Funding Devise a funding mechanism for implementing the design, construction, and maintenance of pedestrian-oriented streets. Include:

- Bonds
- Neighborhood plan implementation monies
- Public benefit feature contributions from developers
- Cjty Property TDRs (See p.) _____

Medium-High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-23.

Purpose

- To dedicate funding for urban design, construction, and maintenance of Green Streets.

Rationale

In the Commercial Core, pedestrian circulation is the least expensive and most effective mode of connecting the neighborhood's retail facilities with other land uses. Yet funding for creating pedestrian oriented streetscapes is lacking. Currently, funding for Green Streets and other Pedestrian improvements relies on FAR bonus system incentives, grant funding, and volunteerism. The current bonus system does not provide strong incentive for developers to contribute to Green Streets as a public benefit feature. Even when the City does find grant monies for engineering and construction, funding for urban design development is typically lacking.

Strategy 5:

Create a master plan to guide the design and maintenance of public spaces in the downtown.

In contrast to downtown Seattle's new buildings, with their attention to architectural detail and high-quality materials, many of the downtown's sidewalks are poorly designed, cheaply constructed, and embarrassingly dilapidated. The Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan supports the Downtown Urban Center Plan's recommendation to develop a comprehensive, urban design master plan. This Downtown Urban Design Plan will guide the design and maintenance of capital projects, street right-of-ways, parks, and other public spaces in the downtown area. The Downtown Urban Design Plan should establish appropriate character and functional criteria for the downtown's public spaces. The Urban Design Plan should build on the goals and policies of the Downtown Urban Center and all the downtown neighborhoods.

See Policies: P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12

Recommendation

Downtown Urban Design Plan Secure funding, designate key City staff, appoint a citizen advisory committee, and hire consultants to form an interactive design team in order to develop a Downtown Urban Design Plan. The Urban Design Plan should:

- Create a highly visual, unifying framework master plan that enhances the unique architectural, streetscape, and public space character of each downtown neighborhood and reinforces a sense of place.
- Establish a hierarchical network of streets, open spaces, and activity nodes that strengthens connections between downtown neighborhoods.
- Address the relationship between public and private space and coordinate public and private development.
- Identify specific policies, projects, and implementation actions.
- Coordinate major planning and design efforts taking place in the downtown.

As it relates to the Commercial Core, the Urban Design Plan should address these issues which are discussed in greater detail on the following pages:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ● Civic Facilities | ● Design Standards and Maintenance |
| – Seattle Civic Center | – Streetscape Design Standards |
| – King County Administrative Center | – Sidewalk Pavement |
| – Seattle Public Library | – Objects in the Right of Way |
| – Light Rail Station Areas | – Public Art |
| ● Public Space | – Streetscape Fixtures |
| – Urban Form | – Landscape Elements |
| – Open Space | – Wayfinding and Public Graphics |
| – Pedestrian Streetscapes | – Design Guidelines |
| – Green Streets | – Repairs and Restoration |
| – Great Streets | – Utility Coordination |
| – Transit Streets | – Maintenance |
| – Sky Bridges and Alley Vacations | ● Implementation |
| – Waterfront and Alaskan Way | – Scope of Work |
| | – Plan Coordination |

High priority. See Downtown Urban Center Matrix, Activity LU-21.

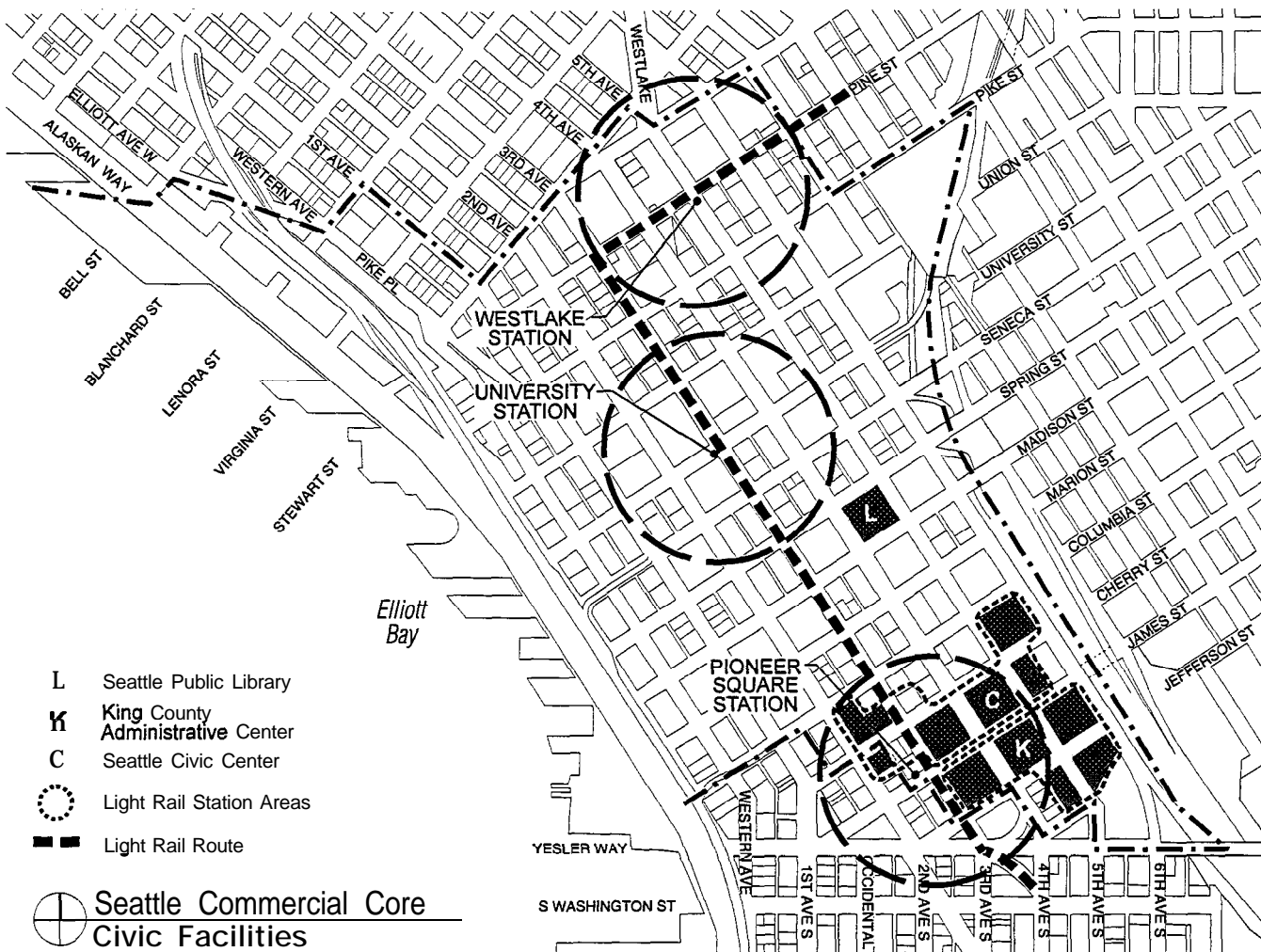
Civic Facilities

Seattle Civic Center Planning for the new Seattle Civic Center should establish a unique, visible, and appropriate image for the seat of Seattle's municipal government.

King County Administrative Center Improvements to King County's courthouse, administrative, and corrections facilities should be coordinated with the adjacent Seattle Civic Center planning, which is proceeding on a parallel schedule.

Seattle Public Library Planning for a new state-of-the-art Seattle Public Library at the heart of the Commercial Core should consider the Library's potential for increasing open space and impacting housing and retail services.

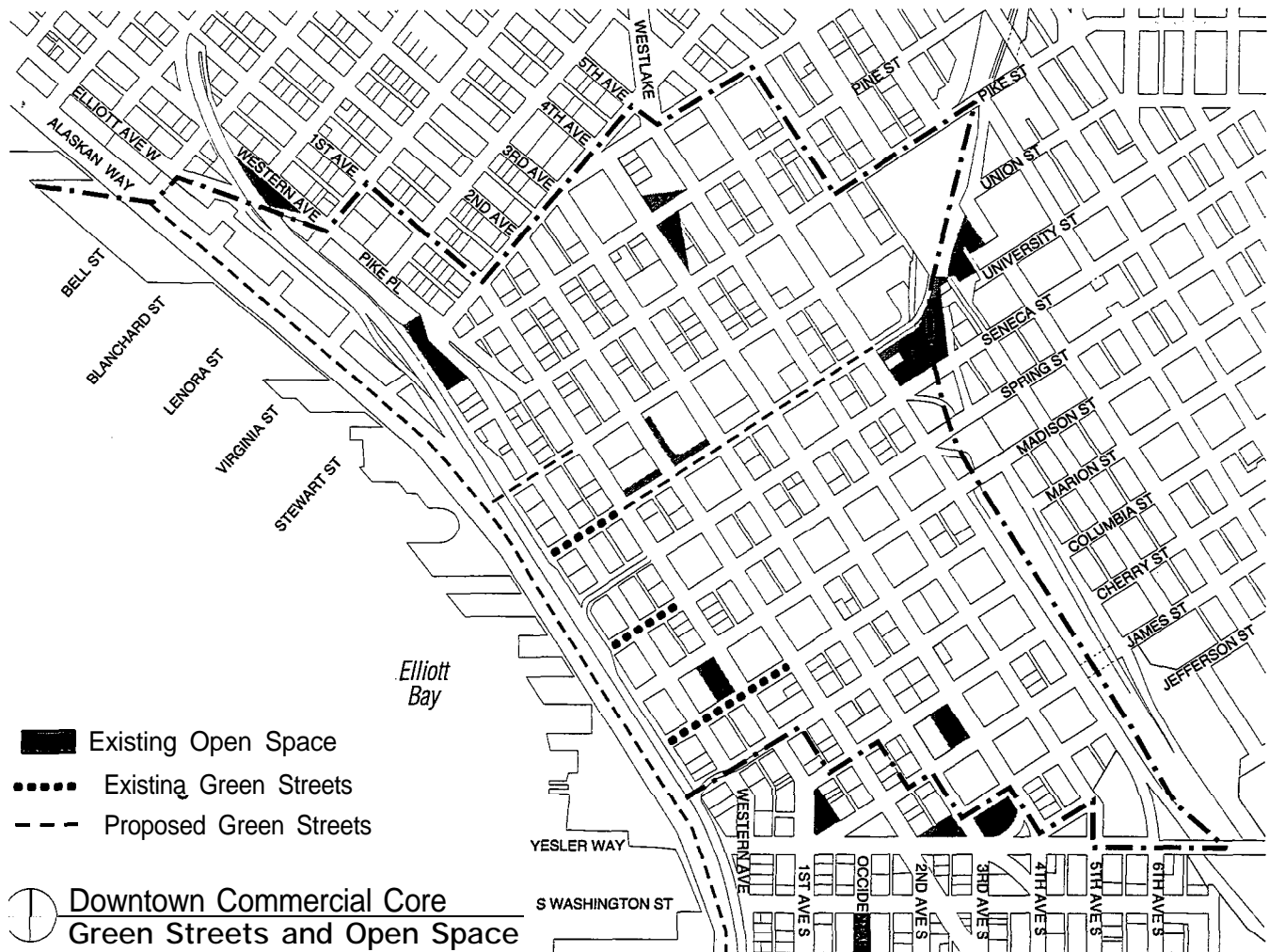
Light Rail Station Areas Planning around transit stations in the Commercial Core should encourage development that reflects the neighborhood's desire to concentrate employment along high-capacity transit corridors. The Urban Design Plan should address pedestrian-oriented impacts around stations.



Public Space

Urban Form *The Downtown Plan* (Office of Management and Planning, 1985) outlines in general terms a number of urban form issues and policies for the downtown including: Historic Preservation; Building Heights, Building Scale; Street Level Views; Street Level Development Standards; Uses at Street Level; Use of Street Space; Signs; Open Space. The Urban Design Plan should review and update these policies and provide more detailed design direction. In addition, the Urban Design Plan should address urban form issues pertinent to the Commercial Core, including: Sky Bridges; Alley Vacations; Landmarks and Destinations; Gateways and Connections; Waterfront Pedestrian Connections; and Water Views.

Open Space Planning for the Commercial Core's open space should be coordinated with other downtown neighborhoods. Open space plan should provide a range of urban, naturalistic, active, and passive open space components. The potential for converting underutilized street right-of-ways into open space should be explored.

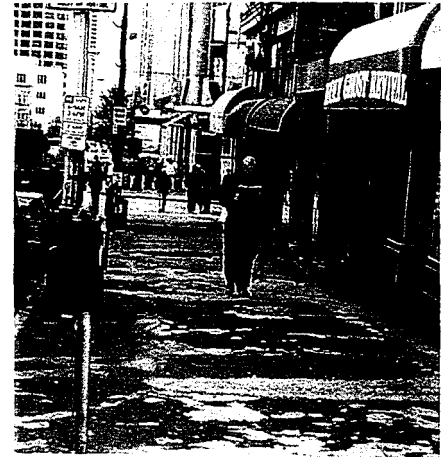


Gateway Connector and Special Use Streets Two of Seattle's main gateway and connector streets are Second and Fourth Avenues. Both streets also have individual characteristics of abutting building plaza/entry courts, public open spaces, public institution structures and strong links to adjacent neighborhoods. These streets, and other Commercial Core streets, should be individually analyzed for their unique contributions to the Commercial Core. This analysis should be the basis for developing urban design standards for individual streets that will define their unique character and guide their future development .



Pedestrian Streetscapes In the Commercial Core, attractive streets with good pedestrian circulation are essential. Streets in the Commercial Core should emphasize the pedestrian as a vital functional component of a comprehensive transportation plan. Light rail and job growth will bring thousands of additional pedestrians into downtown, increasing the need for gracious, safe, well-designed functional sidewalks.

Green Streets Green Streets (existing and new) should be identified as part of the Urban Design plan, with emphasis on streets that connect to the waterfront and to adjacent neighborhoods. Mechanisms are needed for funding, designing, and administering the implementation of Green Streets. These mechanisms should include specific urban design, engineering, construction, and long-term maintenance components.



Great Streets The Mayor's office has designated Westlake Avenue as a Great Street, or a major transportation corridor with opportunities for housing development and intensive streetscape improvements. The Mayor has instructed SEATRAIN to begin planning for implementation and identifying funding for the project. Westlake is an important link between the Commercial Core to Lake Union. The street's width suggests boulevard treatment and its diagonal orientation offers opportunities for creating Green Streets and open space. The Urban Design Plan should address Westlake's role and character and should provide urban design direction to guide streetscape improvements. The Urban Design Plan should also specifically address the design of Westlake Circle, a open space planned for the intersection of Westlake Avenue with Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

Transit' Streets Additional surface bus traffic is anticipated when light rail operations displace bus traffic from the tunnel to surface streets. This high-volume surface bus traffic could be detrimental to the Commercial Core's pedestrian-oriented

retail environment. As part of the Urban Design Plan, coordinated downtown-wide transit planning should consider the Commercial Core's strong pedestrian focus and should include measures to mitigate negative impacts of surface transit on pedestrians. These measures should include intensive pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements, such as well-designed bus stops with shelters that do not impede pedestrian flow on the sidewalk.

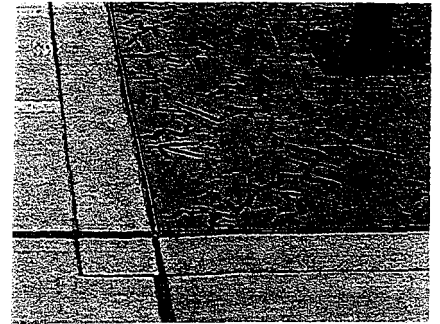
Sky Bridges and Alley Vacations Increasingly, developers are petitioning the City right-of-way vacations that grant use of the public right-of-ways for private development. Sky bridges and alley vacations are becoming commonplace, with little debate over the long-term cost/benefit impact on the street-level pedestrian environment and circulation system. The Urban Design Plan should develop clear policies for limiting street vacations.

Waterfront and Alaskan Way The Urban Design Plan should highlight the downtown's spectacular natural setting and address the relationship of downtown Seattle to its most prized feature -the central waterfront along Elliott Bay. Currently, the entire downtown is cut off physically and visually from the waterfront by the intimidating and noisy Alaskan Way viaduct and arterial. Critical components of the Urban Design Plan should be: development along Alaskan Way piers; Port of Seattle development plans; views of the water; pedestrian access to the waterfront area; opportunities to access to the water itself; waterfront transportation connections; conflicts between rail, freight, vehicle, and pedestrian mobility; and waterfront connections between downtown neighborhoods.



Design Standards and Maintenance

Streetscape Design Standards The Urban Design Plan should review and update City streetscape design and construction standards and customize them for the Commercial Core. Streetscape standards should reflect a character and function that is appropriate to the Commercial Core's streets. Sidewalk widths should meet level-of-service standards, i.e., sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate the Commercial Core's high pedestrian volumes. Sidewalks should also accommodate some outdoor uses of adjacent businesses and provide a buffer between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Streetscape design standards should address: required setbacks from the curb to the walking zone; curb treatments/types; corners layouts (i.e., corner turning radii, ADA ramps, brass inlaid street names); inlaid sidewalk art; utility grates (type and placement); utility boxes (type and placement); utility pole consolidation; and sidewalk pavement.



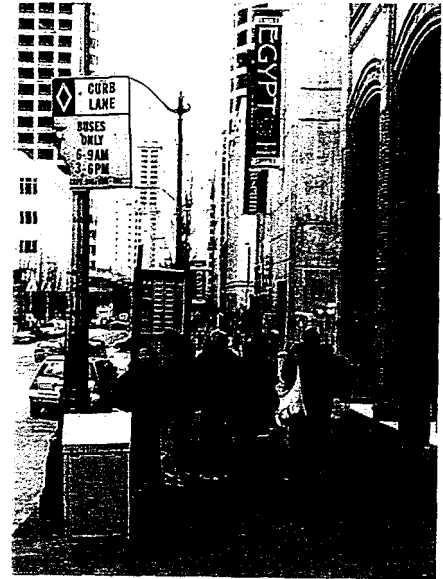
Sidewalk Pavement Because they are typically developed in conjunction with abutting private development, the Commercial Core's sidewalks consist of a hodge-podge of different types and qualities of pavement. Sidewalk treatments vary greatly from site-to-site and block-to-block. As a result, there is no unified Commercial Core streetscape character. Because maintenance of so many pavement types is difficult, many sidewalks have been inappropriately repaired. The Urban Design Plan should establish unifying standards for public sidewalk pavement.

Objects in the Right-of-Way Poorly located utility poles, utility boxes, parking meters, newspaper dispensers, garbage receptacles, sandwich boards, public art, bus shelters, planters, and other objects often obstruct the flow of pedestrian traffic in the walking zone of downtown sidewalks. These objects are especially hazardous for people with vision impairment. Objects in the right-of-way should be simplified, clustered, consolidated, aligned, relocated, or eliminated wherever possible. The Urban Design Plan should develop policies for addressing these issues.



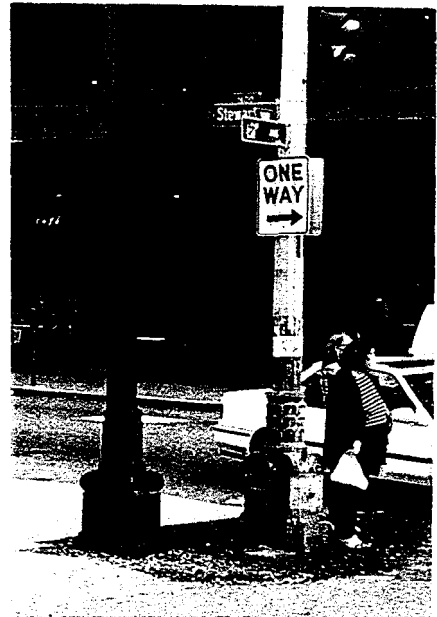
Public Art Public art can celebrate its environment or it can degrade it. The Urban Design Plan should develop a strong public involvement process and criteria for selecting and incorporating art in the public right-of-way. Public art in the Commercial Core should reflect the area's unique context and character.

Streetscape Fixtures Pedestrian lights, roadway lights trash receptacles, recycling receptacles bicycle racks, benches, drinking fountains, newspaper dispensers, kiosks, tree grates planters, utility grates, utility boxes and bus shelters are all pieces of furniture in the public living room. Yet these streetscape fixtures are typically treated more like industrial structures than like functional and aesthetic elements in our public home. Too often, their design and materials are low quality and their placement is haphazard. The Urban Design Planning effort should include research of street fixture manufacturers used by Portland and other cities with high urban design qualities. The Urban Design Plan should identify a set of streetscape fixtures appropriate for use in the downtown.



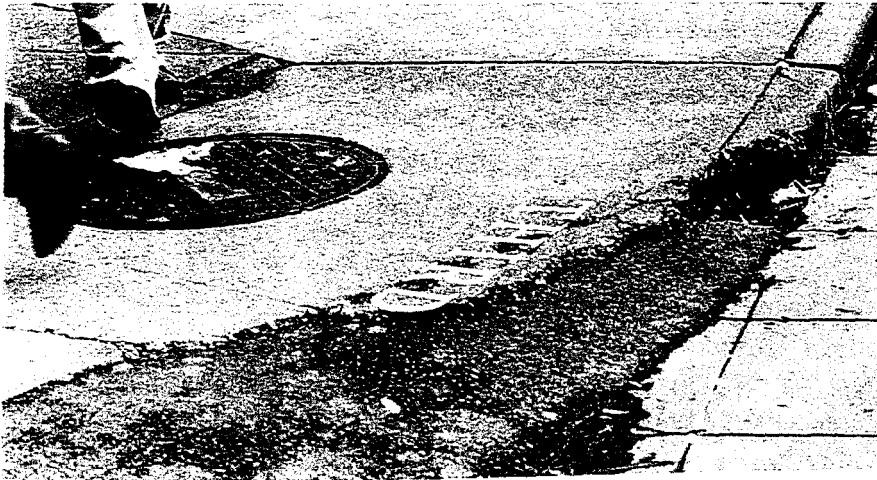
Landscape Elements Not only does vegetation aesthetically soften the urban environment, but it provides environmental benefits as well. For example, street trees mitigate glare by providing shade, improve air quality by filtering carbon-monoxide-polluted air, reduce stormwater run-off by providing soil for water to filter through, and provide a physical buffer between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. The Urban Design Plan should address ways to strengthen both the aesthetic and environmental qualities provided by natural elements. It should establish policies and design standards for the use of street trees (for example, should they be in pits or in raised planters?) and other vegetation.

Wayfinding and Public Graphics Wayfinding signs, street signs, bus stop signs, transit station signs, and other public signs need to be designed in an integrated manner. The Urban Design Plan should build on the Wayfinding study recently completed by SEATRAN and to develop detailed design guidelines for a coordinated system of public graphics. This system should incorporate the visions of the individual downtown neighborhood plans and should be an integrated component of the Urban Design Plan.



Design Guidelines The City is in the process of developing design guidelines customized for neighborhoods. New design guidelines for the downtown are already in process. The Urban Design Plan should coordinate with this process and should address pedestrian qualities (such as the relationship of buildings to the street) and private development standards (such as building entries, setbacks, windows, courtyards; and continuous façade treatments). The process for design review for both public and private projects should also be improved.

Building Form and Massing The existing zoning and land use code contains provisions dictating setbacks, open space requirements, and required modifications of building form. The intent of these provisions is to create more interesting building forms. When uniformly applied, however, the provisions also promote the repetitive building solutions. The urban design plan should look at developing alterations or periodical revision of these form giving provisions. These alterations and periodic changes could promote the development of evolving building types and create a more diverse and interesting urban skyline.



Repairs and Restoration Any construction that takes place in a Commercial Core right-of-way greatly impacts the image of the City that is experienced by thousands of pedestrians every day. The Urban Design Plan should establish criteria for timely completion of sidewalk and roadway repairs so that it does not unduly disrupt business, retail, and tourism activities. In addition, when pavement is repaired, it is typically constructed to much lower design and material standards than the original roadway. The Urban Design plan should establish criteria and standards for restoring disrupted sidewalks and roadways in keeping with their original design and materials.

Utility Coordination Roadways are constructed and reconstructed by many entities. In addition to SEATRAN, various public and private utilities frequently access sub-surface areas in the roadways. The Urban Design Plan should establish requirements for scheduling coordinated street work, and standards for pavement restoration.

Maintenance The Urban Design Plan should develop a policy and funding mechanism to assure long-term maintenance and upkeep of existing and new public spaces.



Implementation

Scope of Work The first steps in creating the Urban Design Plan should be securing funding and hiring a consultant to develop a detailed scope of work. The scope of work should include a comprehensive work program, a phasing plan to produce pieces of the work program, and a detailed budget and schedule. The timeframe for completion of the Urban Design Plan should be no more than two years.

Plan Coordination The Urban Design Plan should build on the Commercial Core recommendations presented herein as well as recommendations from the Downtown Urban Center and other downtown neighborhoods' plans. The Urban Design Plan should also coordinate with: Seattle Civic Center planning; King County Administrative Center planning; Seattle Public Library planning; and Sound Transit station area planning; Monorail and Downtown Circulation planning; Green Streets implementation; South Downtown Planning; Washington State Ferry planning; Port of Seattle waterfront planning; Westlake Great Street design and implementation; Pine Street Planning; downtown Wayfinding project; Downtown Design Guidelines development; South Lake Union planning; and all City capital improvement projects in the downtown.